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Senior Farewell

by JOHN KROMMINGA

THIS is the last class period in ich I may address a group of young n with whom I have been associated three years. Let us seize this occan to alter the usual relationship of classroom and converse not as cher and students, but as friends and ure colleagues in the ministry. Let also depart from the subject-matter listed in the catalogue, not by way denying or ignoring it, but by way summing it up in application.

You have come to the end of three ars of work which are full of so ny things that the mind can neither equately remember them nor assess m. Those three years have been rked in some instances by turbulence. not, now or later, allow the turbuce to loom out of proportion to its tual dimensions. If it should indeed the case that unrest has outweighed nstructive achievement in your semiry career, then someone has failed y badly. But if this is not the case, I fondly hope it is not, then do not ow yourself to think that it is. Do t, for instance, allow the multitude unanswered questions to cause you due distress. It is best, indeed, to ve answers. But if the answers are t at hand in every case, it is at least od that the questions are asked.

Your main task in seminary has been be equipped for the work of addressg and ministering to a congregation, flock of some sort. This is a work th its own peculiar responsibilities d rewards. You have not reached e end of the process of learning what these are. You must go on from here to continue to learn what the ministry has to demand and to offer. You will never quite get through with that learning process, no matter how many days God may give you on this earth. That is a very great part of the richness of the calling with which you are called. It is of these responsibilities and rewards that I wish to speak for a little while before we write "finis" to this phase of your education.

WHAT sort of an age does today's preacher face? My father, in the years when he was approaching his death, used to speak nostalgically about the peaceful, optimistic days which were past, and predict to me that I would never in my lifetime know such days as those. There is little to indicate that he was wrong.

This is an age which is theologically desperate. It is unsatisfied with what the churches have been preaching in the modern era. It is groping for an adequate solution to the problems which confront it. Yet it is unwilling to return to orthodoxy; it demands that whatever solution it finds must be a new solution.

Ours is an age which is morally degraded. It has sown the wind and is reaping the whirlwind. Moral authorities have cast aside the absolute standard of morality, and now that they look again for such a standard, they cannot find it; and if they think they have found it, they find no one willing to listen to them. This age is confused by naturalistic moralities, and it finds its older cultural systems breaking down. The disintegration of the age is reflected in music, literature, art, and society. It is seen in mental tensions and moral anarchy. And you as preachers will face people who are living in that atmosphere and will clearly show the effects of it.

If there is any one thing which characterizes our age, it is a thoroughgoing materialism. The looming threat of the age has not dispelled this; it has only intensified it. "Do we indeed die tomorrow? Then let us eat and drink and be merry today." Communism and Capitalism alike play into its hands. It

This article was Professor Kromminga's ncluding lecture to the senior class at Cal- Seminary this spring.

IN THIS ISSUE

Senior Farewell ..... *John Kromminga* 1
The Christian and American Politics .... *Henry Ippel* 5
The Court's Role in Social Problems .... *Wallace Waalkes, Jr.* 9
Geert Broene ..... *J. G. Vanden Bosch* 12
Italian Journey ..... *Calvin Seerveld* 14
Letters to the *Journal* 15

Senior Farewell — Continued

has deeply affected our own members. You will be privileged to combat this. If you are not minded to do so, don't go on; for the ministry has no rewards for you and you have no message to bring. And if you *do* combat materialism, be sure that you will be often misunderstood. But be consoled also by the knowledge that being misunderstood and speaking the truth often go hand in hand.

Our age is on the edge of panic. The mushroom clouds of atom tests cast long shadows over us. And the best we can do is threaten massive retaliation and plan mass evacuations. The irony of our age is that the race stands in the most desperate need of foundations at the very time when we are farther away from the foundations than ever before. Farther from them, I say, because we are not striving toward them, but we are past them. The Christian answer has been tried and rejected, and now we find it impossible to recapture it. And in such an age you are called upon to preach to people who are daily bombarded with the most powerful media of communication, and are capable of turning a deaf ear to all of them. Those are the people you must contact. With what shall you do it?

It is only the service of the eternal Word and the anointing with the divine Spirit which can begin to make us adequate to the demands of such an age. Let none of us dream that he is sufficient to these things. And yet perhaps we are not poorer for all this. We are reminded of the words of Arthur Cleveland Cox:

> We are living, we are dwelling,
> in a grand and awful time.
> In an age on ages telling
> to be living is sublime.
> Hark! the waking up of nations!
> Hosts advancing to the fray!
> Hark! what soundeth is creation's
> groaning for the latter day.

For the arm of the Lord is not shortened. His strength is made perfect in weakness. He is able still to use earthen vessels to propagate the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. The foolishness of God is still wiser than men. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

You will conduct this task within the framework of a church which is now almost a century old; not old at all when judged by ecclesiastical standards of comparison. But this church is going through an agony of reappraisal and self-evaluation as she approaches her centennial. To mention just a few of the many problems we have touched upon, we have come to feel that we have not yet really begun to solve the problems raised by our tremendous task of evangelization. We have not proved ourselves to be peculiarly adept in work on the foreign mission field. For all of our emphasis on indoctrination, we find that in many individual cases we are not quite achieving the desired objective. Small and closeknit though we are, we have painful differences of outlook at times. And in an age which is talking ecumenicity day in and day out, we are still undecided as to what ecumenical pathway we should tread. These problems and failures are not somebody else's. They are now your problems and failures. For the body has many members, but all the members together are one body, and when the body is in pain, the several members suffer with it.

But who will cast the first stone at the Church which is our mother? She has given us birth, has nourished us at her breast, has contributed generously to make possible the very education which you have now received. She offers us, within her bosom, a place among members certainly not perfect, nor distinguished by scintillating accomplishments, and yet possessed of some fine virtues which are the envy of others; stability, faithfulness, and a certain admirable stubbornness. Let us not bite the hand that feeds us. But let us remember that the Church Militant is necessarily the Church not yet made perfect. Let us militate with her against the weaknesses within first of all, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the Bridegroom who shall come from heaven to take her, perfected unto Himself.

If something of the pulsebeat of the Church has been communicated to you in the three years of Church History the labor has not been in vain. We have seen but a glimpse of the life of the Church. You will spend the rest of your lives filling in the remainder. Only throw yourself into the work of knowing the Church and its needs with every resource at your disposal; with the detachment of the student, that you may see the facts truly; but also with the ardor of the lover, that you may conduct a spiritual work with spiritual vigor.

The staff takes this occasion to congratulate one of its members, the Reverend George Stob, for receiving the degree of Doctor of Theology from Princeton University upon submitting a dissertation entitled, *The Christian Reformed Church and Her Schools.*

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What kind of equipment should ou bring to this task? Let us not nagine that the proper performance f our task is simply a matter of ıtellectual vision. On the contrary, lthough we have been concerned ıainly with the intellectual during the ast three years, the task is best adanced through the application of age-d Christian virtues. These are the mple virtues which have turned the orld upside down. Let me list six these virtues for you; virtues as pplicable to this age as ever they ere to any.

1) The fine grace of humility is the antle of the man of God. It befits e man who lives in the presence of od; who, as a sinner saved by grace, ings the ministry of reconciliation to her sinners. This grace of humility ings the minister to his knees before ery proclamation of the Word of od, in the keen realization that the ırposes of God are accomplished not might, nor by power, but by His pirit. It shows the minister himself, ıworthy of his high calling and great sponsibility, slow of speech and heavy tongue. But this very crushing ırden of responsibility makes him lean ı divine grace; and this is not only ıinently proper, but highly profitable. The grace of humility relates also the fellow minister. Let no man ink of himself more highly than he ght to think — least of all the minis-r. Let us not strive to outdo each her, but let us build one another up. ide over against our fellow ministers capable of ruining the finest talents man may possess.

But let us not think that this virtue easily obtained. Mr. C. S. Lewis has oken of it as one of the last virtues at one learns in this life. I think is correct. The very encouragement hich we need and crave militates gainst humility. The struggle for hu-ility is a life-long struggle, to be gun as early as possible, to be pur-ed relentlessly, and to be crowned ly with the help of the Holy Spirit.

2) Single-minded devotion to your lling is another requisite. The minis-y is not advanced by the man whose incipal interest is recreation and whose inistry is only a sort of avocation. or should you allow even your con-regation to make of you a jack-of-all-ades. You must determine how such ork is best advanced, and jealously ıard the necessary hours spent in the study, the dignity of the ministerial office, and the spiritual character of your work against the encroachments of the modern American interpretation of what the ministry ought to be.

3) Discretion and honesty are also to be applied. If you expect your congregation to confide in you, you must show yourself worthy of that confidence. The self-inflation which is fed by gossip will be a peculiar temptation for you, for you will often have the "inside dope" on the lives of your people. But neither by carelessness nor suggestion may you divulge the secrets which have been entrusted to you. And remember on the other hand that the world is watching you with keen interest. Too often the ministry has been brought into tragic disgrace by men whose ethics were strictly utilitarian. Remember that your ordination is not a license to neglect payment of your obligations, nor is your education designed to help you pull sharp business deals.

4) And of course we must mention those Christian virtues which are justly considered cardinal. You are men of faith. If you expect your preaching of the way of faith to have any effect, you shall have to demonstrate it daily to your flock. If you preach faith, you must have faith. Have faith that the Lord will provide. Have faith that God will grant the increase on a job faithfully and prayerfully done. Have faith that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. That faith, as it grows and is manifest in you, will be a contagious thing, more powerful to work faith in the lives of others than thousands of well-chosen words.

5) Your ministry will be advanced by the exercise of hope. You live in hope. The focus of your life, the center of gravity, is the life to come. Your own scale of values must be geared to this conception. The children of light walk in the light because the light of heaven's fellowship and joy is theirs already by hope; and the ministers of that hope must be examples in this as in all else. The hope of the resurrection, of eternal life, of seeing Him whom we do not now see, can make your decisions more sound, your step more secure, your ministry more effective every day that the Lord allows you to labor in His vineyard.

6) And the greatest of these is love. Who can exhaust the possibilities of this subject? The words of I Corinthians 13 ought to haunt us, to encroach upon our thoughts with every task. Love is the fulfillment of the law. Better than the tongue of angels, better than the wisdom of Solomon, better than the gifts of Rockefeller; longsuffering, kind, unselfish, meek; love is the chiefest virtue of all, in whose radiance all the other virtues find their proper perspective. The love which binds you to each member of your congregation, so that what hurts them hurts you; the love that counts each member of the ministry better than yourself; the love that says of Christ, "I have one passion; it is He." Without that, we are as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

Perhaps the most exalted and distinctive thing about your ministry is that it is performed in the light of eternity. This is true no matter where you labor and no matter how few ever hear of you. Therefore let each man take heed how he builds on the one foundation. Let it be with gold, silver, precious stones.

Eternity enters actively into the performance of your work. You seek the anointing of the "Eternal Spirit, God of truth." And this is the thrilling truth, that you not only seek this anointing, but you have every right to expect it, and you will receive it. Not because of what you are, but because of the calling to which God has called you. It is a humbling thing, sometimes a frightening thing, to know that it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. But in the midst of the humiliation and the awful sense of the majesty of God, this is also the most uplifting and satisfying thing that could happen to a man.

Eternity impinges upon your work also as you discern the life of the Church. The Church is not only the Church Militant, but it is the Church Triumphant as well. Something of this becomes apparent to you as you labor for her welfare. You feel the life of that Church sometimes in a painful manner, when the force of Satan's attacks upon her makes itself felt. The work will not always be easy. You will have to fight, for instance, for the souls of your young people, in the midst of temptations within and without, temptations open and subtle; and you will know defeat as well as victory. But for all the fact that de-

Senior Farewell — Continued

feats and discouragements will be part of your lot, you will rejoice when you see, from time to time, the unabated power of the Word and Spirit of God to work conviction in the hearts of men, and to bring to flowering the bud of spiritual life. Then you will know the truth of Jesus' words, "And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And the light of eternity shines upon the rewards of ministerial service. There is no pot of gold at the end of the seminary rainbow. You will not have steak every week. You may have to wear last year's suit next year and the year after. Your good wife may have to do some patching here and there. But you will not be poor. God has not called you to be poor. God has called you to open your eyes and your lives to new standards and new wealth. Do not shed a tear for the minister of the cartoons and the satires, who ekes out a half-starved existence while men of half his ability wallow in their wealth. Don't pity him; but strive that you also may enter into a wealth of treasures laid up in heaven. I can well imagine that Peter and John had no silver or gold to give the beggar. But I do not consider these apostles objects of charity. The tears of gratitude of a man brought to the light; the unspoken attachment of a heart comforted in grief; the privilege of proclaiming among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; these are reward enough for any man. Learning to lean on the everlasting arms through teaching others to do so; learning in the midst of disappointments that the Spirit still works and gives fruit; learning the power of the Word to work wonders in spite of all our weaknesses; experiencing our own preservation from falling through constant contact with the Word; learning the nearness of God, the need of repentance, the power and the wonder of grace, as you could not learn these in any other occupation —how sad that some can never come to appreciate such things as these! And a new name written which no man can write; the "well done" of a Lord who was made poor for our sakes; the crown of glory that fadeth not away which you shall receive when the Chief Shepherd is manifested; these are rewards of grace, of which we cannot be worthy.

THE light of eternity — others share this precious faith with us. We are not divided; all one body we. Let me quote from the Testimony of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod of 1946:

"Mindful of her calling, the Church will never dissipate her energy in the world; but in the communion of the saints, in the service of the Word and of prayer, and in the use of the holy sacraments, will rather seek to be strengthened from the inexhaustible fountain of the Word of salvation, and thus prove to be a blessing in the world. She will have to live her life consistently and perform her task faithfully in the unshakable faith that the witness of the Church can safeguard her against the dangers of this time. These dangers are not only the dangers of bold unbelief, but also, and fully as much, those of the dimming of our catholic undoubted Christian faith, so that it is at times barely discernible."

And again: "the struggle of the Church goes on through the course of the centuries. But it also increases in intensity as the day of the appearance of Jesus Christ draws near. The work of God in history moves forward to its consummation. From the beginning of the saving deeds, called forth by the fall and misery of man, we behold Him going forth in the amazing way of His Covenant, and see the generations incorporated in the Covenant of Grace. In the light of His revelation we behold Him going forth for the restoration of our and our children's life in Jesus Christ, in promise and demand, and in the fulfillment of the promise by the Holy Spirit. We behold Him in the maintenance and execution of His work, without allowing a single one of His words to fall to the ground; and we behold the history of redemption moving forward, through the depth of Israel's fall, to His New Testament Church. The Church is conscious of the fact that she is living in the last days, and that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in her. She is conscious of drawing sustenance from the treasures of the Covenant of Grace — the same in the old and in the new dispensation — and knows that now the words of God have been entrusted to her in the midst of the world.

"The Church will have to discharge her calling with fear and trembling, pursuing her course through the world without any feeling of self-sufficiency. She must be aware of the fact that the expectation of her coming Lord does not relieve her of her daily calling, but is, rather, precisely the powerful motive for all her labors in the world. May she always be filled with longing, with a strong desire, for the day of Christ, of which our fathers bore witness in the concluding article of our Confession; and may she echo their prayer for His speedy coming. And may she in her expectation of that coming stand on the basis of the word of Scripture; 'And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts'."

OUR own mistakes, our rebellions, our finitude, are not yet at an end. We are not yet through with them. But we are not called with an earthly calling. Let us go on then to be co-workers; with each other, in mutual respect, longsuffering, and fellowship; with those who have gone before, not only in the pioneer days of our own denomination, but throughout the history of the Church and her mission in this world; and even laborers together with God, through a grace which we cannot explain, or even imagine, but in the midst of which we labor.

We do not seek to hold you back from leaving this institution, even though parting has become just a bit hard. This very difficulty is a mark of a sort of success in our mutual task; a success which is very important. It is beautiful and right when people grow together in such a manner that it is difficult to part. But of course you have not come here to stay, and if you should now stay, there would be something seriously wrong. You have come here to go on. Let us go on, then, but let us go together, in the precious though indescribable unity which we have in Christ. We are minded to say to you in our accustomed manner, "All right, fellows; you're on your own now." But really we mean something more solemn and more truly tender than that. And so our parting word to you is to say as the Spaniards say, "Go with God."

The Christian and American Politics

by HENRY P. IPPEL*

POLITICS is every man's meat. There are as many opinions on politics and politicians as there are views on theology and preachers. It is an area of life worthy of mention from the pulpit or over a cup of coffee, in classroom or factory; there is no season in which it is out of date.

Yet, it is very desirable that we more fully understand some of the political aspects of the world in which God has placed us. In our discussions on Calvinism and Politics we may not be divorced from life. Perhaps we can more intelligently venture what *should* be after we have considered what *is*. The observations we wish to make begin with a consideration of the character of politics, followed by comments on the Dutch political experience and the American political system, concluding with a brief glance at some of the political developments of the past century.

The area of politics presents certain distinct difficulties for the Christian. We are confronted immediately with two loyalties — with two citizenships — with dual responsibilities. For we are at once citizens of the Kingdom of God — and whether we like it or not, we are inextricably also citizens of a sovereign state. From neither of these kingdoms can we extricate ourselves. Nor should we wish to do so. For the state, as the political manifestation of society, is an obvious necessity in a civilized world. We might say, that one of the marks of civilization is the establishment of the state. And we must say, that God, in His restraining grace, has ordained the state as one means of social control. Thus the political problem is a real one — it cannot be bypassed. A man's answer to the antithesis in Art may be that he doesn't view paintings or is not artistically inclined; or in the realm of literature, that he merely reads the Bible and devotional literature. In the political realm, however, he is a member of the state; the state is an expression of his political development. Therefore, regardless of whether he refuses to vote, or join a political party, or write his Congressman, or run for office — he is still part of the political community and he must take some position relative to it.

From the very nature of politics, therefore, certain difficulties are encountered. Politics, or things political, has to do with the state, with government, with enforcement, with regulation. In a definition of the state, we would assume that all the people, within a distinct territory, will be subjected to a government. A Christian state could be one that either had a majority of its population Christian — or one which followed Christian principles, perhaps unconsciously, not deliberately, but adhering to them nevertheless. Yet, regardless whether the state is Christian or not, Christians are members of it and have some measure of responsibility towards it. In the state, the Christian does not live as an isolated individual, nor does he exist in isolated groups — he is part of the whole nation; he is ever in contact with others within the same body politic.

Politics is moreover a manifestation of the struggle for power — a struggle between many opposing forces: not just the blacks against the whites, nor simply church against the state, or the Lancastrians against the Yorks, or Republicans versus Democrats. Politics has to do with the struggle for power or for influence by an individual or groups of individuals with a stake in the state. Thus while Christians may make up one of these forces hoping to influence the politics of the state, the Christian camp itself will be divided into interest groups and pressures of divergent natures. Christian farmers, for instance, do not see eye to eye with Christian laborers. Christian business interests have different political views than Christian intellectuals. Even more concretely, if Christians, more particularly orthodox Christians, cannot agree upon the proper interpretation of Holy Writ, how can we expect all Christians to agree on such an elusive and dynamic subject as politics? Therefore Christians in politics will be participating in a struggle for power, most certainly against the forces of evil, but also among themselves against divergent economic, social, and possible doctrinal forces.

In politics there is not just one method to attain your objective. There is not simply one ordained, established path by which we attain our political goal. Politics has to do with various methods by which individuals and groups try to influence their government. They may, for instance, wish to have the government stop certain conduct that is disturbing the public order. Or they may demand that government compel the settlement of some conflict which threatens the public peace. Individuals and groups may also wish government to enforce some social change they want, or refrain from enforcing some social change they don't want.

But how can these objectives be reached? There are various ways. Our political objectives can be reached through the ballot box. John Pierpont wrote in *A Word from a Petitioner*:

> *A Weapon that comes down as still*
> *As Snowflakes fall upon the sod;*
> *But executes a freeman's will*
> *As lightning does the will of God:*
> *And from its force, nor doors nor locks*
> *Can Shield you: 'tis the ballot box.*

Our political objectives can be reached thus by the power of the vote; or with political propaganda or education. Perhaps organized political activity through political parties or pressure groups will be necessary. Individual political service by Christians is also a means of reaching the goal — either as elected officials or as career men in government posts. If it is true that Communists have at times given direction to governmental policy by virtue of their positions in government, then we can similarly expect — and more acceptably — that Christians in office or in government posts will permeate public policy with their views as well. These are alternatives which must be analyzed and possibly utilized in reference to the existing political situation.

Since there are these varied methods, the difficulty is not only to determine whether one, or some, or all must be utilized. But more important, the question is which of these methods best

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satisfies the demands of the Christian in his distinctive approach with His Christian political program? Since there is in politics an oligarchical trend, how can we satisfy the demand that *all* Christians work to promote the Christian program? By oligarchical trend, we mean that there are only a few individuals who can sit in the high places of the executive, legislative, or judicial branches of government — or that there are only a few in the higher ranks of the party who are in a position to determine public policy. The masses sit idly by — and the Christian masses can sit with them — casting a vote for his distinctive party — perhaps giving a dollar for a political campaign. The question that this trend toward oligarchy presents is this: will such passivity satisfy the demand for antithetical action by all Christians? As in other spheres, the Christian organization may be the easy way out, giving men the opportunity to sit back and say: "We have a party."

* * *

OUR perspective for an American answer to the antithesis problem as it relates to politics has been greatly affected by the political experience of Calvinists in the Netherlands. That our thinking should be so affected is very natural. We, as a slim minority of Calvinists in America, look to the experience of the larger numbers. Moreover, we are just now adjusting ourselves to the American scene, and therefore we are casting about to see how other Calvinists have adjusted themselves to their world in implementing a world and life view.

The Reformed folk of the Netherlands have found great satisfaction in separate political organizations. The forthright discussions of Groen van Prinsterer, and his attempt to achieve success with an Anti-Revolutionary faction within the Conservative party, culminated in the organization in 1878 of the Anti-Revolutionary party — a political party in the strict sense of the word. The political issue which solidified the support of Calvinists around the banner of a separate party was its defense of Christian education. It must be remembered that confessional or clerical political parties of this type arose and flourished in most parliamentary countries on the continent at that time. These parties were distinguished by their zeal to conserve the historic religion of their several countries and to conserve certain ecclesiastical rights, especially education. These parties were part of the growing complexity of the multi-party, parliamentary governments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They were established as rallying points, dependent upon live issues, with very good chances of electoral success.

The Dutch experience reveals that although the Anti-Revolutionary party may have been based on distinctive Christian principles, yet because it was a political party — interested in political goals, it had of necessity to compromise. Political success was gained through working for the achievement. The Anti-Revolutionary party had to enter into negotiation and agreement with other political groups to achieve their goals or to approach their goals. Prof. H. Daalder of the University of Amsterdam concluded a stimulating article on "Parties and Politics in the Netherlands" in *Political Studies* (February, 1955) with these observations: "On the whole, the most remarkable paradox of the Netherlands has been that its often extreme sectarianism has not prevented practical cooperation. The Netherlands can have party disputes that are almost theological in nature and yet have sound administration. There can be such great disagreement over politics and yet, in some ways, alarmingly little over policy." The Calvinist parties have learned that an all-or-nothing attitude, a no-compromise position, contributes nothing to government; it may spell utter defeat.

The Dutch experience has also shown that in the matter of specific political issues, the Christian is hard put to come up with a distinctive clearcut answer. The application of his Biblical principles is not easy. The Bible, for instance, has nothing specific to say — pro or con — on the issue of free trade or protective tariffs. And thus Kuyper and Colijn found themselves in opposite camps arguing for opposite positions both claiming support in the word of God. It is all right to base one's platform on platitudes of justice, equity, brotherly love, Christian virtues; but a party must have a program; it must have something concrete to offer for concrete situations. A Christian political party must witness through its political program. But the program is more than a witness. It must be operative when the party gains office or is invited into the councils of government.

* * *

NOW that the Reformed people of the New World are anxious to find a solution to the problem of the Christian's position in twentieth century America, many are eager to transplant the Dutch political experience to the American scene. This eagerness is understandable when we contemplate the lack of a real Christian political activity, either individual or organized, by the Reformed people of this country. There has been much talk of action — but no real concerted effort. Thus many have been led to believe that the answer must be found elsewhere — naturally in the "Fatherland." Although this seems like a logical method of implementing Christian political action in America, it is especially here that we must be aware of the political situation.

First of all, there is the difference in historical and political background and tradition. The mere fact of contrast embodied in the 400 years of Dutch history with the 175 years of American history is significant. I would like to borrow a few exerpts from a statement on "Christian Social Action in the United States" formulated by a group of Calvinists under the sponsorship of the Christian Labor Association.

". . . In contrast to continental Europe, the United States never experienced the French Revolution, which so sharpened ideological differences in Europe; further, that in the United States, the influences of the Enlightenment and Rationalism have been countered much more than in Europe by the remnants of the Puritan and Nonconformist tradition, which played so important a role in our early history; and that consequently, there is not in the United States the sharp division into embattled ideological groups which has so greatly influenced modern European history.

"American society is still greatly influenced by the Christian thought and ideals which helped pattern its culture and many leaders in education, politics, industry, labor, and other fields are members of a Christian church and amenable to Christian influence. It is also true that American society insists that religious differences shall not interfere with the sense of common will and

ultural solidarity. It aims to tolerate ll religious faiths and all ideologies ithout distinction or preference; it is verse to making religious faith a ondition for any type of advancement r preference; it is averse to making eligious differences an issue in poli- cs."

In contrast to this fine descriptive atement of the United States scene,)r. J. J. de Jong of the Free University, peaking at the Hague Congress of the nternational Political Science Associa- on in September, 1952, made this bservation: "Perhaps in no other ountry in the modern world do re- gious divisions as such play a more reponderant role in the daily life as n the Netherlands. One will find these ivisions in almost every field of human ctivity: political parties, trade union ovements, broadcasting corporations, omen's organizations, education — to ive only a few instances." These two atements point up very clearly a basic ifference between Europe and Ameri- a. Whereas in Europe, confessional r clerical parties are acceptable, any mergence of such groups is viewed ere as "Un-American."

The feasibility of transplanting a arty organization fostered within the)utch political climate also runs counter) the American two-party system. The)utch governmental system — as nearly very European system — encourages ne proliferation of political groups. his multi-party system makes possible inority parties — or confessional arties. On the other hand, the two- arty system is antagonistic to such evelopments. Either party system is cceptable in a democracy. However, 'e should for a moment consider our emocratic form of government.

Essentially it is a "government by onsent." Such government by con- ent gives to the citizen only a few lternatives of action. The citizenry an *reject* that alternative or those alter- atives which are least compatible with heir opinions and attitudes. The citi- enry can *give* its support with greater r lesser willingness to the alternative rogram and leadership which best uits them along the actual possibilities. he policies ultimately adopted then re normally such as are accepted as easonable solutions by a large part of he population. Policies of this sort re necessarily compromises.

In the democratic system, therefore, nany policies actually adopted are not egarded as the best possible solutions)y any significant number of persons. They are merely accepted as workable compromises; compromises which are accepted without too much difficulty by most of the groups directly concerned with them.

In the two-party system the necessary compromises are made before the elections take place. Each of the two parties are in themselves compromise groups. The voter is normally given no opportunity to vote for exactly what he or his particular interest group wants. He is however given the opportunity to choose between two alternative compromise programs, either of which could actually be put into operation. American political theorists, since John C. Calhoun, have dubbed this the doctrine of concurrent majority rule, or simply the "broker rule."

In the multi-party system, each party offers to express in the national councils the naked class — or distinctive principal — viewpoint of particular groups in society. This is the offer they can unashamedly present to groups which support it. The voter in the multi-party system, therefore, has usually no difficulty in finding a faction or a politician that he can wholeheartedly support. He can vote for what he wants, *but* he knows, if he is at all politically sophisticated, that there is no possibility at all of his viewpoint being put into effect without serious modifications, at least under democratic conditions. After the election, the necessary compromises in the multi-party system are made by the very politicians who have gained seats in the legislature on a distinctive, intransigent program.

Another evidence of the difference in political structure which bears on this problem are the respective electoral systems. In order that the multi-party system might be operative in Europe, an electoral system still wholly unacceptable in the United States has been utilized. The American tradition has tended toward the single-member district for election of representatives. This has affected American party life and the nature of our representation to a considerable degree. On the other hand, the whole of the Netherlands forms one electoral district. The hundred Tweede Kamer (popular chamber) seats are divided among the political parties contesting in an election on the basis of a mathematically almost perfect system of Proportional Representation (usually designated as P. R.). This system of P. R. provides that each party obtains a number of seats in the legislature corresponding with the number of electors voting for it. In fact, whereas the use of P. R. is limited to a few local communities in our country — and is today less popular than two decades ago, the entire Dutch political scene is dominated by it. Even members of the Eerste Kamer are chosen by members of the Provincial States on the basis of P. R. And the Provincial States are elected themselves on this basis. And in each of the almost 1000 municipalities, the Administrative Council is elected by the local inhabitants with the same system. Thus we note the extreme emphasis upon this electoral method which gives various parties the opportunity of representation according to popular strength.

The success of minor political parties — or of a multi-party system — is dependent upon the electoral method employed. If the system allows for broad representation, parties of all shades can and will emerge. But the sucess of minor political parties or of a multi-party system is greatly encumbered by our single member district plan from which only one party can emerge victorious. If there are more than the traditional two parties contesting an election, only one party will be chosen through an election by plurality. The unsuccessful party or parties find very little rationale for existence if they cannot gain even a plurality of the votes cast. They may continue to be "vehicles for the expression of political discontent," but not a true political party. How effective continually unsuccessful political organizations can be in forming public policy or giving direction to administration is debatable.

In contrast with Europe, the American purpose of popular elections is not merely to express the viewpoints of the voters, but also to provide a government that is capable of governing. This has been achieved through plurality or majority elections, with single member districts, and two major parties.

If we advocate Proportional Representation or a multi-party system as a proper field for the practical working of a Calvinistic Party, then we must accept P. R. as the electoral system for the nation. If we seriously suggest this, we recognize that we are running counter to American experience. It would moreover necessitate important changes in our entire electoral system. P. R. would, in fact, subvert our Presidential system of government and alter our basic concept of Separation of Powers. It would mean the accept-

Christian and Politics — Continued

ance of groups of all sorts and kinds formed around religious, social, language, racial, and other contentious distinctions. P. R. invites these groups to seek to harden and intensify their differences by bringing them into political action. Many of these groups would be irrelevant, if not disturbing. The American political system is designed to bring unity out of diversity, not to magnify disharmony.

* * *

A broader view of politics asks that we briefly consider some of the drastic and even revolutionary changes which have taken place in the past century. These events have altered the world in which we live; they have colored political thinking to a great degree.

A quotation from the *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (April 8, 1926) is still *apropos* today. "If one were to pick out the half-dozen men who have most profoundly moved the world from the middle of the 19th century, Marx would have to be one of them." Marx's writings and the organized workingmen's movement he led have been important factors in the spread of ideas that have been extensively applied during the past century. Socialism and Russian Communism have swept the world in reaction to the evils of the Industrial Revolution. No country in the world has been unaffected by the emphasis placed in the economic determinism of these ideologies. As a result, there has been a marked change in the attitude toward government and the functions demanded of government. The 19th century "Laissez faire" — accompanied with the idea that "that government is best which governs least" — has made way for democratic socialism, the welfare state, New Deals, big government, responsible government. The impact which the government as such makes upon every individual today was never envisioned by a Marx. The regulatory functions of the most conservative state in many instances surpass the most urgent demands of a 19th century radical.

The trend toward centralization has produced totalitarian regimes in Europe and belated cries of "State's Rights" in our own country. Although this trend can be connected to the developments noted above, it must be more closely related to the two world wars and the vast economic depression of the past few decades. Total mobilization against economic distress as well as total mobilization against foreign aggressors has led to the centralization of power in the most democratic countries. Consequently, whereas a century ago there were significant areas of human activity relatively immune from governmental regulation, today we face increasingly the prospect of deliberate encroachment upon the most basic of human rights.

A change of another sort in the last one hundred years is the vast extension in the popular basis of suffrage. Universal suffrage is taken for granted today. The only limitations provoking attention are the arbitrary restriction of the 21-year age limit and the illicit or extra-legal coercion of the Negro in the South. Yet, this universal suffrage as we know it today was a very radical concept in the late 19th century. Naturally the vast extension of these political rights has broadened the base of political organizations and broadened the program of government. For the greater the electorate, the greater will be the demands upon the state. Moreover, with the broadened franchise, all segments of the aristocratic rule have disappeared. The masses are more interested in the best singer of cowboy ballads than in the student of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Calvin, or Jefferson. It is to this mass that the politician must go with his platform; it is this mass which must be satisfied to the extent perhaps of making a congressional investigation a three-ring circus; it is this mass which will cast the deciding vote to determine whether your party will be represented in the councils of government or not. Political parties cannot appeal to a select few; they must make their appeal to all. Therefore, a Christian political program must be satisfactory not only to the clergy or the teachers or to the "pillars" of the church, but it must be appealing to the Christian masses; a Christian mass which unfortunately is just as much influenced by the press, television, comic book and stock market as its non-Christian counterpart.

One other major change in the American scene has been the coming of age of the United States. Perhaps it is all premature — but here we are — in a position of leadership in the Western World. Washington plays the role once played by London, Paris, or Berlin. From isolationism we have moved to internationalism. The Atlantic is less of a barrier today than the Rhine was a century ago. The answers to Dutch political questions in 1900 were for the Dutch alone. The answer to the pressing problems, domestic and foreign, facing the United States today will have a very direct bearing upon the entire world situation. The Christian's answers to today's problems cannot be provincially narrowed to the effects upon the American people; our answers will and must show that there is content to our "world" and life view.

* * *

Some tentative conclusions can be drawn from the various points we have considered. We should note that the challenge of Christian political action today is no less than it was at the time of Groen and Kuyper — and in certain ways, the mid-twentieth century presents a greater challenge. The appeal of non-Christian ideologies, the extensive powers of the governments, the tendency to a glorification of the state — all this makes the Christian mission in politics extremely urgent.

At the same time, we must admit shamefacedly that Calvinists in the Netherlands have had a greater effect upon their political scene than we have had in this country. But on the other hand, we must be aware that the potential of the Christian in America dwarfs the position of the Calvinist over there.

However, we must also consider that Christian political action, organized or unorganized, encounters real difficulties in the American system of government. Since politics is a very practical sphere in which we are interested in implementing practical objectives, we must consider seriously how best to carry out a Christian program here and now. This means that Christian political action must be carried on within the framework of the practical political scene — geared to existing situations. As these situations change — or as we help to alter our political system — Christian political action can take up new positions and utilize other methods.

The solution to the dilemma of the Calvinist in politics depends on a Christian political program. The prerequisite, before Christians can work in the political sphere, is that a Christian political program be worked out. We can cry for action — but we must

be prepared first to say what we want to do. Have we failed to take advantage of the freedom of discussion so basic to our democratic life? Have Calvinists been too jealous of their distinctive position? Or have we been fearful lest our contributions be criticized and attacked in the market place of ideas ? There is a definite need for a forthright venturing of ideas, Christian ideas, relative to political policy. The Church cannot do it, but Christians must — in periodicals and discussion groups. There must be a willingness to continually submit the world's political problems to our distinctive Christian point of view.

The Christian mission cannot be satisfied merely by putting a political party into the fray; nor by gaining a position of political prominence for a Christian of some stature; nor by protecting our peculiar Christian interests in the state. The Christian mission in politics can be implemented satisfactorily after a program encompassing the Christian view of the twentieth century American state, in all its domestic and international complexities, has been devised.

The Court's Role in Social Problems

by WALLACE WAALKES, JR.*

IT is possible that the word Court conjures up in your mind a picture of a tribunal like the Sanhedrin or perhaps you regard a court as a place where debates are held or a Judge as merely an umpire of a contest, calling the play from a set of rules called laws. In a sense the courts do act as umpires, but the subject matter is a bit more complex than a ball game. Matters of social interest are the daily fare of a judge. In one sense everything a court deals with involves social problems. However, while cases involving corporations, crimes, property, and contracts may all be associated with society's problems they are not as directly involved as certain other fields of the law with the problems of living together in a society and a community. It is these other fields with which we are concerned here today — the areas in which the sphere of government overlaps and reaches into the social sphere.

As Calvinists we speak frequently of "sphere Sovereignty" and discuss the sphere of the church, the sphere of government, and the social sphere. If only these spheres could be definitely bounded and lines of demarcation clearly laid out and nicely compartmented, this would be more easily comprehended. However, we live in a complex world and the lines are many times blurred, overlapped, and fused together. Because the courts deal with human relationships, with the problems of living together in a society, it is sometimes difficult to see any clear lines between the sphere of government — the judicial branch — and the social sphere. Nowhere is this more forcefully brought out than it is in the area of social problems involving the Family. Divorce, Alcoholism, Mental Illness and Children's Problems are concerns of the court as they are of all of us.

Judges do not have unlimited freedom in these matters any more than they do in corporation, contract, and property matters. The late Justice Cardozo of the Supreme Court has put it this way: "The Judge, even when free, is not wholly free, he is not to innovate at pleasure, he is to draw his inspiration from consecrated principles and exercise a discretion informed by tradition, methodized by analysis, disciplined by system and subordinated to the necessity for order in the social life . . . the power of interpretation must be lodged somewhere and the custom of the Constitution has lodged it in the judges." The court, an arm of government, finds itself in the social sphere therefore, because of the necessity that order be maintained, that the certainty of law be infused into the solution of these social problems and so that individual rights and freedom are protected and preserved in planning the solution to social ills.

As ministers you play a role as family counsellors in these problems. I would ask you to keep in mind that by the time the problem has reached the courts, it is advanced, complicated and many other avenues have been tried and have failed. Counselling by the minister, help from the social agencies, efforts of friends and relatives, action by consistories have taken place *before* the matter reaches the courts and have not provided a solution.

We have already mentioned that the courts do not have unlimited latitude in dealing with these problems. Within the framework of the law, however, there is some latitude in interpretation and application of fundamental legal principles which may afford choice of solutions. This is particularly true in those family problems which we discuss today.

It should be said here, too, that law is not an exact science and we do not deal with scientific axioms and formulae but with the everyday concerns of ordinary citizens. There are no two cases exactly the same — history never repeats itself in the courts. The material we work with in the courts is intractable and it is too psychological to work with by any mechanical process such as that 2 and 2 makes 4. Yet we believe that there is an absolute law and an absolute standard. This concept is not accepted generally by the Bench and Bar however, and instead we read a definition of a judge composed by one who feels that all law is relative: "A Judge is a somewhat overworked person who must assure himself of a past event in which two wrangling litigants were concerned and then, within the limits imposed on him by statute and precedent, must make a judgment that will satisfy in a general way the moral standards of his fellow citizens." This is difficult enough but when absolute standards must be satisfied as we all believe they must, it becomes many times more complex and difficult. Cardozo's statement earlier referred to does mention consecrated principles but I am certain he did not there refer to the Divine Law of God as the absolute standard — he was thinking more in terms of the necessity for order in the social life, and man-formulated principles and precedents.

The power of interpretation and application of statutes and laws to any given set of facts is sometimes a fearsome thing — and especially charged with grave responsibility in matters

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involving human rights and morals of our citizens as they attempt to live in our society. All Judges sense this and in gatherings of judges the talk is rarely of property and corporation matters but of the grave matters affecting the adjustment of our citizens in the life of the community. These are social problems and in some of them courts have a large role to play. In dealing with them a judge sees the whole panorama and the complex forces that constitute them.

It should be stated right now that judges are lawyers and their formal training is woefully lacking in this field of social problems. Much of their education is aimed at producing an advocate rather than a counsellor, much time is devoted to property, corporations, legal rights and duties and perhaps not nearly enough to that which would give them a better understanding of the great problems of living together in a modern, urban community. Yet the courts must work with many social agencies and organizations in trying to solve these problems.

Divorce

WHAT has been said so far about the court's role is probably pointed up most sharply when it is asked to put asunder what God has joined together. I mean Divorce. Right here in Kent County we have a higher divorce rate than the national average — so this topic hits close to home. To understand what is happening it might be well to review the grounds for divorce which the Legislature has enacted into our statutes. Divorces in this State may be granted on any one of 8 different grounds. Operating within this framework, the Court must often sign a decree of divorce in pursuance of the law he has sworn to uphold and administer. The Legislature has built this framework of grounds for divorce; if they are not palatable, to the Legislature must be directed the efforts towards changing this state of affairs. Efforts to dissuade the parties and effect a reconciliation have been tried before the court hears the case, the 60 day waiting period or cooling off time has elapsed and where children are involved the 6 months prohibition against remarriage is invoked—all of these are certainly desirable brakes upon divorce Hollywood style—yet in many cases the decree does eventually become final and another home is broken. Desertion for two years, adultery, physical incompetency at time of marriage, life sentence, sentence for three years or more, habitual drunkenness, neglect and refusal to support, and extreme cruelty are all grounds under the Michigan Statutes.

By far the greatest number of divorces are granted on the grounds of *extreme cruelty* which the Legislature has defined as follows: "For the cause of extreme cruelty, whether practiced by using personal violence, or by any other means." The task of interpreting what is meant by Extreme Cruelty is left to the courts although the Legislature's language already indicates that it could be something less than physical cruelty — and while the courts have been careful never to say it in so many words, the truth is that it has been extended by interpretation to mean what the layman thinks of as "mental cruelty." So the Supreme Court of Michigan has held that slovenliness in dress, filthy habits and feigned illness on the part of a wife" amounted to extreme cruelty. Certainly a court in applying the statute to any given case has some leeway — one judge's notion of what acts or words may constitute cruelty sufficient to dissolve a marriage may differ widely from another judge's. I have heard judges say that if people are bound and determined not to live together, they will get a divorce somehow anyway — even if they have to go to another easier divorce state.

While it is not the purpose of this article to become involved with the stand of the Church and Synod on the divorce question, let me impart a word of practical advice at this juncture. To those of you who are from time to time called upon to determine from court records what the grounds for divorce really were, usually you are concerned whether there was adultery. There probably is adultery involved in many divorce cases although it cannot be winnowed out of the court records. Sufficient legal proof of adultery is difficult to come by — it is not the kind of sin that is committed in the public square — extreme furtive secrecy is almost always involved in the commission of it. Therefore, the Bill of Complaint or the Decree which you examine may speak of such things as extreme cruelty in that the Defendant did consort with other women, told plaintiff he no longer cared for her, returned to his home at 4 A.M. three nights a week and refused to explain where he'd been — all of this might well be a facade which hides an actual adultery. The court records which you examine may not have the actual stenographic notes of the testimony given at the hearing — these notes might reveal more than the other papers in the file.

If you still have in mind a court proceeding in which both sides of the matter are forcefully represented, you will not understand the court's role in divorce matters. The large percentage of all divorce hearings are uncontested or as the lawyers say "pro confesso" — taken as confessed by the opposite party. While a controversy may have existed in the beginning — by the time 60 days and more have elapsed as required before the hearing may be held — one party has decided not to fight and contest the matter. The result is that the court hears only one side of the problem and no cross-examination takes place. The record made at the hearing contains the uncontradicted testimony of only one of the parties to the suit — this is true in 9 out of 10 divorce cases heard by the courts. Operating under the statute passed by the Legislature setting out the grounds for divorce and faced in most instances with no contest and no denial of the charges and grounds set forth — what else can the court do but sign a decree of divorce. When you speak of the court being too easy in granting divorces just remember that the parties want it, the Legislature has spelled out the grounds upon which they can have it and there is no one urging the court not to grant it and no one producing proof that it should not be granted. Refusal by the court to sign a decree in such a situation might well result in a mandamus action or at least an appeal in the Supreme Court of Michigan to compel the judge to sign the decree granting a divorce under the laws if grounds have been made out.

There are some other practical matters involved in the lawyer's handling of divorce to which I invite your attention and understanding: An attorney comes into a divorce case right at the time the parties are ready to put their names to legal papers which if filed with the court become records which are public records forever. Here is a large area of responsibility for a lawyer — he assists the party whom he represents in the taking of a step from which there

may not be any turning back — the mere signing and filing of a bill of complaint for a divorce may widen the rift and put an end to all further attempts at reconciliation.

Frequently an attorney will be confronted with a sense of chivalry on the part of the husband whose wife has been unfaithful and he wants to divorce her but he does not want to hurt her by making public disclosures of the true but unsavory facts. Or perhaps it is not chivalry at all but a sincere desire to protect the children from the harsh truth of their mother's wrongdoing and he tries to tone down the charges to some extent for this reason. I am not condoning this but merely bringing it out in an effort to have you understand better some of the problems in divorce which a court must face.

There are many judges who hear the great grist of *pro confesso* divorce cases day in and day out who deplore the situation — some have said they would like to see divorce abolished altogether. While this might bring other problems into focus and create some impossible situations, they feel that it would be the lesser of two evil situations. This much is certain; something should be done in at least three directions: More and better counselling in efforts at reconciliation before the parties come to the courts; re-appraisal by the Legislature of the whole statutory framework of grounds for divorce; and last and by no means least, the selection of judges who have the stamina to resist the engulfing tide by requiring sound proof of whatever grounds the Legislature legalizes.

Alcoholism

We turn now to the commitment functions of the court which bring it into contact with alcoholism, mental illness, drug addiction, and mental deficiency. The framework within which the court must operate here are the commitment laws which in turn are based upon the premise that no one may be deprived of his liberty without due process of law — a constitutional guarantee. The point being that enforced hospitalization is a deprivation of liberty and safeguards must be set up in the due process of accomplishing a social necessity — even though in most cases the persons involved do not have sufficient insight to realize that they need to be treated in a hospital — they must therefore be forced to take such hospitalization. Private, voluntary hospitalization occurs without this requirement of commitment, of course, but more often than not the person involved does not want to be hospitalized and resort must be made to the courts. Much could be said about the archaic state of our commitment laws but that is not within the purview of this talk. A person addicted to *Alcoholism* may be committed to an institution under the laws of this State. In the Probate Court where these matters of commitment are handled, we see many alcoholics and they present one of the most baffling problems which a court has to face. Enforced hospitalization by court order rarely helps and is sparingly used for that reason. The church and its ministers have little more success. The only bright spot in an otherwise discouraging picture is the work of an organization with which the court works quite closely — Alcoholics Anonymous. In an area where even 25% effectiveness is hailed as a great triumph — we might do well to study what it is that AA has that we do not have. How many of us really know what this organization does and how it employs its twelve steps to sober living so effectively? We must realize that you cannot preach an alcoholic into sobriety and furthermore we may as well acknowledge that AA succeeds many times where the church has failed. Nor will success be found with alcoholics by platitudes and moralizations to brace up, be a man, Where's-your-will-power? kind of approach. Whether alcoholism is a disease or not is not important for the purpose of this discussion although I have heard many physicians and experts in the field give convincing arguments that it is. I am only asking that we look into AA to see what they have to offer.

Twelve suggested steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to other human beings the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our short-comings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and practice these principles in all our affairs.

If you would sit in on a gathering of AA when they are talking about their twelve steps, you would be impressed at once that while they do not use theological language, they talk of God and you will be struck with the fact that they seem to be groping towards the three cardinal points in Christian living: Sin, Salvation, and Service. They do not refer to the Bible, they may show little respect for organized religion, they are carefully undenominational, but they seem to be looking for a faith. They pray "Lord, keep me sober for today," and repeat slogans like "Life by the inch is a cinch but by the yard it's hard." And still they discuss evil in their own makeup as it is rarely ever discussed outside a church. They talk about confession, prayer, meditation, and service with the utmost sincerity and without embarrassment as though it is the most important thing in the world to them. They seem to be trying to put some of religion's vital principles to work effectively — and you cannot, as theologians, judge this movement by its conformity to standard nomenclature and procedure — AA will not fit into that mold at all.

Let's do some straight thinking about this: Supposing at Sunday morning service in your church with everyone dressed in their Sunday best, a drunk comes lurching down the aisle and takes a seat next to one of your prim parishioners. This man is dirty, unkempt, dishevelled and either somewhat drunk or in the first throes of a terrible hang-

Court and Social Problems — Continued

over. How welcome would this man be — who would know what to say to him and how to say it? Most likely the ushers would remove him from the scene and certainly they should — he is not in fit condition to be in the Lord's House. Now, if this same man wandered into or was brought into an AA meeting — he would have the immediate sympathetic counsel and commiseration of a group of fellow alcoholics. They know the lingo of an alcoholic and will probably tell him that they were many times in the past in much worse shape than he is. If this man truly wants to be helped with his problem — he will have many who are eager to help him. Helping a fellow alcoholic to sobriety is known as 12th step work and here is where the service comes in.

Now you may call this groping, you may look down your noses at AA, but why not be realistic about it and recognize that they have something in their fellowship. Actually a close kinship exists between the Church and AA which each has failed to appreciate. Mutual understanding is long overdue — no one is asking nor thinking of merger or formal endorsement — but the Church can pick up where AA leaves off. An AA member who has successfully lived the program for a while is a prime prospect for new or usually renewed church membership. He can then be made to see that in his groping in AA and realizing how evil had taken hold of him, how low he had sunk, how he should turn to a higher power other than himself — that he was only coming from a different direction at the Sin, Salvation and Service which the church preaches. You know I am always reminded of the 1st Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism when I attend an AA gathering — they, too, put first things first and in some of their 12 steps they begin to realize how great their sins and miseries are. Not in that language but the essence seems the same. AA openly encourages men to turn to their God as they know him — after being cleaned up, sobered up and starting to think on these things — ministers should get to work —AA will try to start helping to bring them back into your fold — at the bottom of the ladder — or even encourage those who never had a background of religious training to turn to it.

There are other problems on which the slant of the Court may interest the church-man — such problems as those of the mentally ill, the juvenile delinquent, and the like. I shall speak of these next time.

Geert Broene

by J. G. Vanden Bosch

THE Lord is no respecter of persons or of social status. The men He raises up for Kingdom work have been chosen from many social levels and from various kinds of human activity. Moses, the greatest figure in the Old Testament, for several years lived at a royal court and was educated in the schools of Egypt. Paul, who looms greatest in New Testament history, sat at the feet of Gamaliel at Jerusalem. John the Baptist had the advantage of being the son of a priest and had the training of an ascetic. The sons of Zebedee were fishermen by trade. Amos was a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. Surely, in a sense history repeats itself. When we read the life history of the Reverend Geert Broene, we are reminded of the prophet Elisha, who was called to be successor of the great Elijah as he was plowing in his field with twelve yoke of oxen. Thus God called a farmer by a sudden summons to be his voice to his ancient people. In a manner not entirely dissimilar God summoned Geert Broene, pioneer farmer of East Saugatuck, to the work of the gospel ministry.

Geert Broene hailed from a section of Germany designated as the Graafschap Bentheim, better known as merely Graafschap. In English we would say county or earldom. This stretch of land, about forty-five miles long and about fifteen wide, viewed on the map, seems at one time to have been carved out of Dutch territory, and borders on the provinces of Drenthe and Overisel. Partly because of its geographical situation it has always had close relations with Holland. Politically the earldom has had a checkered history, being governed by counts or earls whose right to rule was determined by the law of hereditary succession. Ecclesiastically, Professor Beuker in his *Tubantiana* distinguishes five periods: the original Lutheran, the Reformed, the collegiate, the Roman Catholic periods, and the period of return partly to the Reformed and partly to the Lutheran system of church government. The people were overwhelmingly Protestant, but the meddling of the counts in the government of the churches accounts for the periods Professor Beuker distinguishes. During the first third of the nineteenth century, owing to the influence of the French Revolution, liberalism was in the saddle.

THE spiritual awakening that swept over the Christendom of western Europe also reached the Graafschap Bentheim. In this awakening, a certain J. B. Sundag, a lumber dealer of the village of Bentheim, who had heard the Rev. Hendrik de Cock, the father of the Secession, preach during one of his business trips to the city of Groningen, took a prominent part. Other important personages taking part in it, whose names have a familiar sound to us in America, were Geert Broene, grandfather of the subject of our sketch, H. Beuker, Johannes Rutgers, Steven Lucas, and Klaas Ensing. Here, too, the persecution was severe. In fact, the history of the Reformed churches in Graafschap Bentheim runs parallel to that of the churches of the Secession in Holland. In public services the Dutch language was used until recent times at least in some of their churches, and always there was a free exchange of ministers. Today the half dozen churches constituting the Classis of Graafschap Bentheim form a constituent part of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands. From these few congregations have come a large number of ministers serving churches in both Europe and America. Among those who were in charge of Christian Reformed parishes in this country were J. H. Vos, H. Beuker, J. H. Schultze, H. Potgeiter, J. Robbert and F. Schuurmann, who had their training across the water, and H. Ahuis, J. H. Beld, G. Broene, E. Broene, J. Gulker, H.

Walkotten, J. Walkotten, and G. Westenberg, who had their training in Grand Rapids.

There is another section of Germany, known as Oostfriesland, situated about seventy-five miles north of Graafschap Bentheim and having the city of Emden as its central point. Also here the influence of the Secession was felt so that five Reformed churches were organized. From this region, too, came several of our ministers such as C. Bode, H. Bode, G. L. Hoefker, J. Plesscher, J. Timmerman, W. R. Smidt, and D. H. Kromminga, all of whom rendered valiant service. These churches also have affiliated with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. To produce so large a number of ministers, a number very much out of proportion to the membership, a vigorous spiritual life and a deep love of Christ must have flourished among the Reformed people of both Graafschap and Oostfriesland.

GEERT Broene was born September 16, 1838, the oldest son of the family, at Uelsen, in the earldom of Bentheim. His father was a farmer. Already at the early age of nine the boy tended his father's sheep on the heath a rather long distance from home and often experienced great fear, especially during thunder storms. At twenty-five young Broene began to entertain thoughts of going to America in the hope of availing himself of the superior opportunities the new world offered for making a living, but his father's unwillingness to permit him to go unaccompanied frustrated his desire. The desire to migrate, however, remained with him and he made it a matter of earnest prayer. Ever since the movement to Western Michigan began in 1847 under the leadership of Van Raalte, several Graafschappers had left for the new world and naturally sent letters to relatives and friends in the homeland which contained encouraging reports of their improved material status. These letters circulated in the neighborhood, were read aloud in the family circle around the hearth, were lengthily discussed, and often led to decisions also to migrate. This also happened in the Broene family. Curiosity ripened into desire, desire into action, so that in the summer of 1865 the family bade farewell to the old home and arrived at Graafschap, Michigan.

The following year Broene married the young lady to whom he became betrothed in the homeland and soon the young couple bought forty acres of woodland near East Saugutuck. Here Broene did the work of a pioneer farmer, felling trees, splitting rails and fence posts, hauling timber and bark to mill and tannery, clearing the land of brush and stumps, and raising crops on the soil thus cleared. In 1873, after much prayerful deliberation, he sold his farm and left for Muskegon to prepare himself for the ministry with Rev. D. J. Vander Werp. In 1875 he with his family moved to Grand Rapids to continue his training under Rev. G. E. Boer, and in 1877, having finished his studies, was by the General Assembly which met in Chicago declared eligible for a call. The churches he served were Noordeloos, Roseland, Zutphen, and Crosby Street, Grand Rapids. In 1904 illness compelled him to ask for emeritation. Fifteen years of rest and occasional preaching were still allotted him. In 1919, the death of a much beloved daughter-in-law was too much of a strain for his sympathetic heart so that after an illness of only a few hours he passed on to his eternal home, being eighty-one years old.

Geert Broene was not ordained until he was thirty-nine years old. But long before this, opportunities to be trained for the ministry had come his way. When he was still in his early teens, the Reverend Jan Bavinck, his pastor, urged the parents to give their son an education with a view to the son's becoming a preacher of the gospel. The parents were willing but the son, though fond of studying, deemed it wrong to avail himself of this opportunity because he was not yet sure of his conversion. A few years later the pastor of a neighboring church urged him, and he lent a willing ear. With three others he actually appeared at a meeting of classis, but one who was a teacher was selected. A little later classis again called for volunteers and he was again urged to present himself, but his failure to be selected at a previous session had put an end to his ministerial aspirations, though the desire to proclaim the gospel of the Cross would at times still assert itself.

BROENE was already thirty-five years old and the father of a growing family when the irresistible summons finally came. One day as he was making his way on foot to the village of Graafschap on a lonely road there suddenly spoke to him a voice from within that he was called to be a preacher of the gospel. This voice startled him and he prayed for forgiveness if it was the prompting of a proud heart. He did all he could to silence it, he hid the fact even from his wife, and he tried to persuade himself with an array of arguments that it could not be obeyed, but the more he resisted the stronger the prompting became. Finally, after much prayer and deliberation he decided to yield and to make his decision known to his consistory in which he was an elder. Encouraged by this body, he went to Chicago with his pastor, Rev. J. R. Schepers, to present himself to the General Assembly, which accepted him as a student and promised him financial support.

As Cowper's hymn has it, God surely moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. We cannot understand why Broene experienced frustrations in his early life and why the desire to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ was not realized until he was about forty years old. Had he heeded the suggestion of his pastor, Rev. J. Bavinck, when he was still in his early teens, and could he have grasped later opportunities, how much better his preparation and how much longer his pastoral career would have been. One thing, however, seems certain: during all the years when promising abilities lay dormant in him, God was preparing Broene for his major task in life even by means of disappointments.

Let it be remembered that Broene had his share of affliction. When he was still in his teens the father and four children were laid low with typhoid fever. The attending physician entertained hopes of recovery for all except for the oldest boy, our Geert. But contrary to all expectation he also recovered. Since work on the farm had been retarded, young Broene, weak though he was, began to work and overexerted himself with the result that irreparable injury had been done to his body. This was for him a bitter experience. He feared that he would be seriously handicapped in the struggle for existence and that many of the joys of a normal life, even those of matrimony, might be denied him. Often he shed bitter tears, so poignant was his sense of bitter disappointment. Even wicked thoughts of God and his government of the universe would force themselves upon him. But fundamentally his trust in his God never wavered, and his cheerful disposition never forsook him.

Geert Broene — Continued

There were several other painful incidents in his life. Soon after their marriage both he and his wife were afflicted with malarial fever, so common in new settlements and so hard to overcome. Financial losses, too, brought worry. What was far worse was a broken leg when his labors on the farm were much needed. The great fire of October, 1871, which swept through western Michigan and rendered many neighbors poverty-stricken and shelterless also threatened to destroy his timber and home. Unable to be moved, he begged his wife to flee with the children, and to leave him to his fate. Fortunately rain intervened.

Even during his student days Broene was not spared anxiety. No sooner had he arrived in Muskegon than Mrs. Broene was attacked by a serious lingering illness. After a year and a half of uninterrupted study Rev. Vander Werp became ill and Broene was called on to do some of the pastoral work, such as preaching and conducting catechism classes and funerals so that his studies were seriously interrupted. But he weathered all these storms and emerged with a serene and triumphant faith. All these adversities, we make bold to say, God used in the training of Geert Broene for the sacred office.

God had endowed the subject of our sketch with a tender religious spirit. From boyhood up he was deeply concerned about the salvation of his soul so that he wrestled much with his God in prayer. Finally assurance that he was a child of God took root in his soul, and he lived in close fellowship with his God. His misfortunes did not embitter him, but led him to examine the genuineness of his faith. Life's hardships not only tested, but also made him exercise his spiritual endowments, and the result was spiritual gain. The warm piety characteristic of Bentheim Calvinists came to beautiful expression in Rev. Broene. One of his sons paid him this beautiful tribute: "Especially during his later years Father lived very near to God. Daily he walked and talked with the King. I verily believe that in these last years I could at times, and that often, see something of the glow of heaven upon his face."

Humility was a marked trait of the man. Though he was repeatedly urged to write the story of his life for the benefit of his descendants, he long refrained because he feared that he would violate the law of truthfulness, and portray himself in too flattering colors. Conscientious, too, he was. When calamities overtook him, how afraid he was of having offended his heavenly Father. In a heart thus conditioned by the grace of God, the spirit of thankfulness is inevitably strong. Writes his son, "How appreciative he was of the smallest kindness and what a privilege it was to sit down with Father and Mother in their last little home to a simple meal and hear him pour out his heart in thanksgiving to God for all the undeserved blessings."

Such being the man, such being his limited preparation, and such being his experiences, one would not expect him to preach sermons replete with abstractions and profundities. Being a simple-minded man, rich in the knowledge of Christian experience, he preached sermons that were spiritually helpful. Versed in the ways of the Lord with his children, he was a faithful and much loved shepherd, who knew how to speak to the sick, the dying, the lonely, the burdened, and even to the erring. It is not hard to understand why Rev. Broene was moved by the unfortunate circumstances of many aged people, so much so that he was active in promoting the cause of a home for them. For many years he was vice-president of the Board of the Holland U.B.A. Home.

Rev. Broene was the father of a daughter, who became the wife of Rev. J. L. Van Tielen, and several sons, one of whom, Johannes, was for many years professor of education and psychology at Calvin College and twice its president. A brother, Egbert, father of Albert Broene, who was professor of modern languages at Calvin, graduated from our seminary in 1883 and nobly served the church. Rev. Broene's autobiography appeared in *De Wachter* from December to May, 1925-26. The fact that the manuscript sent in was its first uncorrected draft reveals the author as a composer of no mean ability.

With the passing of the Rev. G. Broene there left us one who was a worthy representative of a section of Germany that gave us a goodly number of faithful ministers, and one who was a transitional figure, having received part of his training in the manse with Rev. D. J. Vander Werp and part of it in the newly organized theological school. Together with G. Hoeksema, he was the first to graduate from this school and was a living demonstration of what the churches might expect. Likewise he was a good example of several of our ministers who began their labors at a comparatively advanced age, and in spite of limited preparation served the churches honorably. It is good for us to remember the rock whence we were hewn.

Because of these considerations Rev. Broene deserves to be honored in the series of biographical sketches appearing in this journal. A still greater honor is that through his labors there often was joy among the angels of heaven. What greater distinction can any mortal covet?

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Italian Journey

by CALVIN SEERVELD*

Some time ago I hitch-hiked to Florence from Zurich, Switzerland. The weather was friendly and warm. When the sun went down and the dark came in and the autos would stop no longer, I found an Italian vineyard with a fence about the trees. I wrapped my head in a towel and lay upon the ground under a fig tree, my suitcase for a pillow. I prayed the prayer my Mother taught me when a child:

Now I lay me down to sleep;
Tender guardian angels keep.
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee Lord my soul to take.

I slept well. A soft red dawn and the tolling bell from the nearby monastery woke me at 5:00. I ate carefully from my shrivelled Dutch cheese, washed my face in a country fountain, and walked into the next town.

I quartered in a villa just outside the third wall of Florence. There were lizards on the veranda, mice in the kitchen, and shining olive trees outside the window. Seven hours a day I spent in the University of Florence, learning the language, listening to lectures on Italian literature, history, art. A new world to me.

If a person had eyes you could see the Italian people: the most beautiful young women tastefully dressed, high-heeling it along the narrow sidewalks. Meagre groups of wrinkled brown flat-chested old women sat bent and alone with their rosary beads in the dusky side chapels of the cathedral. Stout jolly fruit-vendors hawked fresh figs and peaches, holding melons aloft in their pudgy hands. Always beetle-like monks in coarse brown robes moseyed about the poor sections, brushing aside the little shops' metal streamers to extend the open, empty, waiting palm. Handsome young blades with excitable hands waited together in the open evening air to eye, appraise, and pleasantly accost touring American girls.

Firenze è und città intima, snug and lovable, a treasure of history; too proud to know its underpaid bureaucracy eats cheese and wine and dies of TB, too beautiful to change and build atomic skycrapers, too old to be surprised and too happy to discourage anything. A city of laughter and curiosity. It would not understand provinciality.

Now the summer is a kaleidoscope in memory. Swimming: you spring into the Rhine and the mighty current catches you and sweeps you downstream; slowly you work toward the bank, snag a rock to climb out and shake yourself dry, while the massive still water rushes by. Or you swim lazily on your back through water lilies in a Swiss mountain lake while the water becomes cool and the blue sky turns titian around the edges and the birds sing clear like before a thunderstorm. Or you battle with the warm rolling breakers of the Mediterranean and swim past them to dive porpoise-like in the foam. Or you practice flips from a diving board into the yellow muddy Arno and choke on the dirty water dripping through your nose.

Sightseeing: you climb the tower of Pisa and stand a bit nervously on its bald top, trying to look unconcerned as you grip the thin iron railing and look away to the Appenines. You watch a Roman priest bless the neighborhood's prize horse before the candle-bright altar within the church, and then rush with a hurrah toward the arena and jostle with the townspeople for a good seat to the bare-back race, the Siena Palio. You wander through lovely shy Arezzo while the summer sun feels kind and strong against the back of your neck; here are the marvels of Piero della Francesca and there is the lonely Via Madonna Laura with a woman's underclothes hanging rakishly above the street marker.

Art (the unspeakable unwritable part that must be self-seen): the Adam and Eve fresco by Masaccio in Chiesa Santa Maria del Carmine makes you want to cry; if you were a child you would reach frightenedly for your mother's hand, and if you were lovers you would move your bodies close together to be assured standing tight and still, and if you were an old man you would just gaze and gaze staring with head thrown back and then stooped walk away very very slowly. The world of David lies bare in Lucca della Robbia's Cantoria where the marble moves and the psalm is heard and you feel quick and innocent like a child again. And still, so still, paints Fra Angelico on the walls of St. Marco; if ever the monastic spirit appeared dedicated and pure, single, even holy, it is here.

Books: hid deep in the university library is the beautiful faded folio edition of Ficino that you hold gingerly and attentively as if it were a new-born child. There is the delight to find and meet Da Vinci and Galileo and Campanella in the attic rummage of an antiquariat in the back streets of town, and the thrill to possess and to read and to understand Cavalcanti's *Donna mi prega, perch' io voglio dire.*

There were also the experiences that make you older because you are younger: it was in Prato for *Rigoletto,* chewing sandwiches with friendly Italian students and poor families in the top balcony. Late in the evening Rigoletto emptied the room to talk to his daughter; he began the tone with his back to the audience as he closed the rear stage door; he turned and the tone crescendoed imperceptibly, he walked slowly toward us and the same tone became round and strong and hurt and brave and it filled your ears and your heart; and he knelt by the footlights, old and pathetic in his garish pied habit, and the same tone swelled and cried until it broke, humanly; when wave after wave of beautiful sound in the climatic duet had made you sweet and heady, they finished, and spontaneously you stood and shouted *Bravi! Bravi!* and applauded and shouted *Bis! Bis! Bis!*, and the little Italian boys stood rapt, black eyes shining; and they sang it over again.

It was 10 kilometers outside Como on the return hitch-hike, late in a black night; I had given the trucker and his helper a cigarette, we talked; they began to flatter me. Gradually I sensed it, soon I understood the soft menace. *Preferisco partire,* I said at a blocked railroad crossing, and rose. The baby-faced driver smiled over his shoulder, *Perchê?* The helper locked the doors and turned to smile, a smiling villain, his mustache twitched. We argued and I became afraid and angry together. Aspira! Then the action just seemed to happen like when you forget the next line of your solo but the words automatically come. I opened the door, knocked the helper to the ground, grabbed my baggage and jumped down. I felt safe and mature in the glare of the headlights, and braced my shoulders for my pack and the long walk in the rain through the rolling Italian countryside.

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* Calvin Seerveld is a graduate student at the Free University of Amsterdam.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

Pastor and Physician

DEAR MR. EDITOR:

May I have a little space in your sprightly *Reformed Journal* to reply to an article in the April issue written by Rev. C. Wm. Flietstra on "What the Pastor Expects of the Physician"?

I was a little surprised about this article because it does not present a true picture of the medical profession in general.

In the first place, Rev. Flietstra gives the impression that abortions are the common thing in medical practice. In my experience in the field of medical practice for about a quarter of a century it has been the unusual thing. If detected, it means loss of hospital practice, probably also loss of membership in the medical societies and ostracism by the medical profession. The fine in New Jersey is $2,000 plus seven years in prison at hard labor. If the patient dies of a criminal abortion the fine is $5,000 and fifteen years in prison at hard labor. We ourselves have been instrumental in keeping one doctor out of the medical society because we had ample evidence that he was an abortionist. We may not even give patients advice where they can be aborted because the law says that in that way we become partners to the crime.

Of course, there are therapeutic abortions that we sometimes advise. In one instance a Catholic priest concurred in our opinion and granted it. But the Lord was gracious to this mother. She aborted spontaneously.

As far as those are concerned that "conceive out of wedlock" I am glad that the writer states that there are only "some doctors" that slight these cases. I think we usually tell the patient to get married without delay. Of course, in some cases that is quite a problem, if not an impossibility.

As far as euthanasia is concerned, I do not believe that the rank and file of the medical profession favor it in its extreme form. For one thing, the law forbids it. There is, however, a minor form of euthanasia which I believe every physician practices many times. We often treat elderly patients and those that have an incurable disease and that we know are about to die. We then consult the family and they usually agree with us that the case is hopeless and further medication may lead only to more unnecessary suffering and even may shorten the patient's life. We then stop all medication except that which can make the patient more comfortable. In several instances patients have asked us to give them a needle so that they would wake up no more. Of course we do not do that. To the contrary we fight with the patient against old age and disease as long as we can. Usually we go to extremes. Thus I remember one instance in which a brother-in-law of the patient that died told me, "Doctor, all the medicine you gave my sister-in-law for the last month was wasted, was it not"? I told him that it was not. In the first place it comforted the patient and in the second place I told him that it was good for him. He should realize now that the doctor fights with the patient against his disease till the last minute. That should give him some comfort during life, particularly if he gets sick.

The author also writes about artificial insemination. The doctors with whom I associate are not fond of it. Of course, in cases of sterility the semen of the husband is often used with success and not one seems to be against that. Even the Catholic Church sanctions that. But to use an unknown donor and all the hazardous dramatics that go with it presents so many unfavorable angles that we tell people that it is much more sensible to adopt a child outright. There are, however, cases where the husband is definitely sterile but the wife is not. It is very well possible that due to her psychological make-up the frustration of being able to produce children of her own and yet not be able because of her husband's sterility, may throw her into a severe psychosis. I am not yet ready to condemn the practice in a case like that. Let the Christian moralists not refer too glibly to the Decalogue. We meet with practices in the Bible, particularly the Mosaic Law of Levirate, that to our mind are more hazardous to morals than artificial insemination. Place yourself in the position that when your brother has died you and your brothers have to see to it that you make the widow conceive. It seems to me that if artificial insemination had been known in those days it would have been a better way out.

The writer also mentions lobotomy and topectomy. There is some reason for argument here. But it is used as a last resort and after much consultation and deliberation. The results are by no means always bad. We should be hesitant to condemn. The church in the past has condemned many medical practices which it now lauds. Think of the classical example of the use of anesthesia in childbirth. Had not God ordered that women should produce children in pain? Finally Sir James Simpson told the theologians that when Eve was made from a rib of Adam the Lord put the latter to sleep too. That settled the argument.

Finally there is the problem of how much to tell the patient in instances of incurable diseases. I remember how three doctors discussed this problem, an Englishman, a Scotchman and an Irishman. The first said, "I tell my patients everything." The Scotch doctor stated, "I tell them nothing." The Irishman said, "I tell them so much that they do not know what to believe." Personally I do not believe in lying to the patient. It is a sin against God. It affects us ethically. And in the long-run it does not work. Of course, we must be diplomatic. One patient must be treated differently than another patient.

We do not mind it at all that Rev. Flietstra brought up these points. He is sincere. His experiences have been unfortunate. Let medical practicioners take it to heart. But what is presented by Rev. Flietstra does not represent a cross-section of the practice of physicians. It is not our aim just to defend the medical profession. Our purpose is to present a balanced truth.

Thank you for the space.

Yours truly,
Peter G. Berkhout, M.D.
Paterson, New Jersey

" . . . let us be found among the 'quiet in the land.' We all wish to see quiet families, and quiet churches, and quiet neighborhoods, and quiet nations; and it will be so if there be quiet hearts; and not otherwise." — Matthew Henry, in *The Quest for Meekness and Quietness of Spirit*